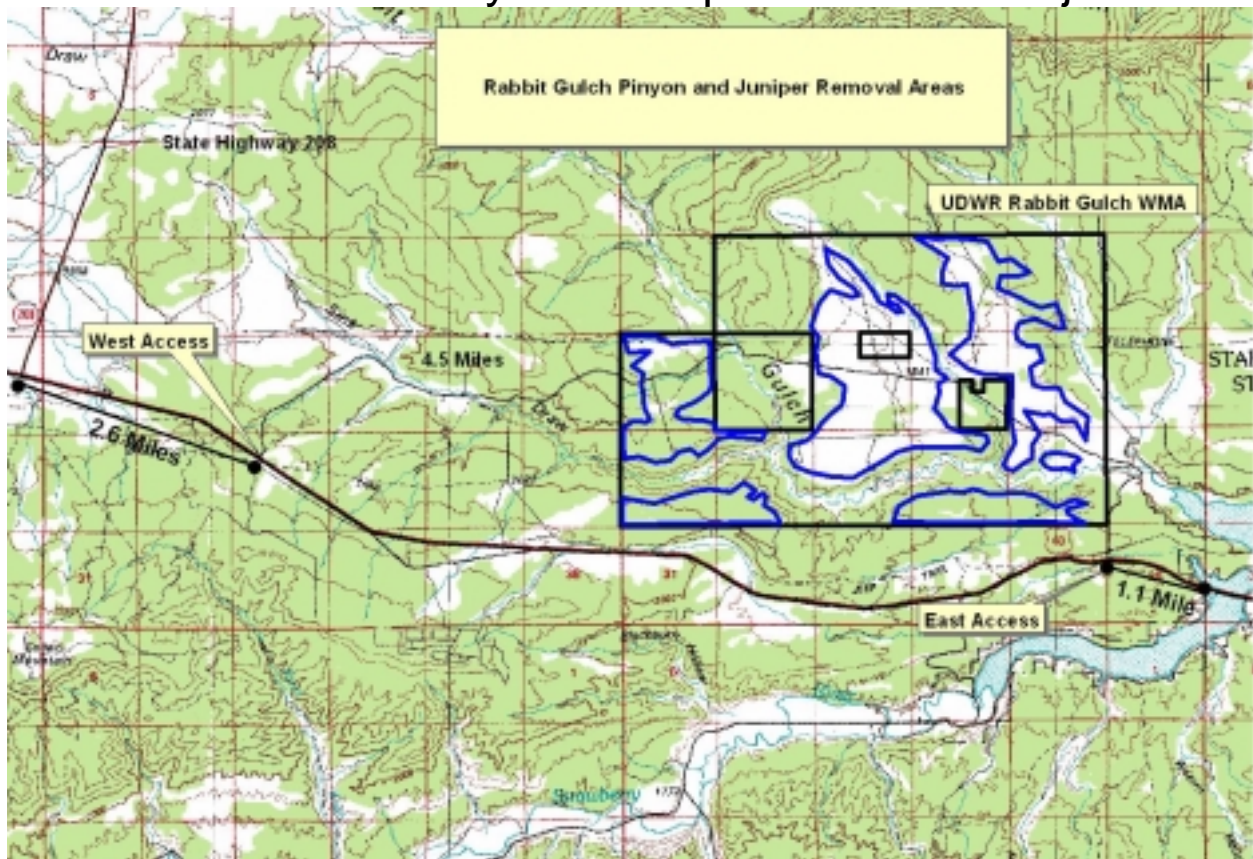


Rabbit Gulch Pinyon – Juniper Removal Project



Thanks for showing an interest in the Pinyon-Juniper Removal Project. The project is designed to enhance deer and elk winter range by removing young pinyon and juniper trees that are encroaching on previously chained areas. The biologists have asked Dedicated Hunters to target the old chaining areas in the Rabbit Gulch area this year.

The original chainings were designed to promote shrub, forb and grass growth to improve watershed conditions and provide winter forage for deer and elk. Throughout most of these chained areas, pinyon/juniper (P/J) trees are rapidly invading. As the trees grow larger and more abundant, they consume more water and nutrients making them unavailable for shrubs and understory plants such as grasses and forbs. Within another 30 to 50 years, this valuable deer winter range will become a mature P/J forest, which will contain little or no understory vegetation. In short: little forage = few mule deer or elk.

To protect the forage on these deer and elk winter ranges we have a few options: burning, chemical treatment, chaining, and physical (tree by tree) removal. Prescribed burns and chemicals kill trees but also kill the shrubs so we lose forage values. Chaining protects more shrubs but would give only marginal results. The younger trees are flexible and bend under the chain, thus only a few older trees would actually be uprooted. Also, these three treatments can be politically sensitive and are expensive. With tight budgets, physical removal seems to be the best option currently available.

Rabbit Gulch:

The removal areas are outlined in blue on the map above. The best way to reach the site is from Highway 40 between Fruitland and Starvation Reservoir. From Fruitland, continue east past the Tabiona turnoff roughly 2.6 miles. You should pass the rest stop and climb a hill, then at the bottom of the hill turn left (**street sign 36730 West**). Follow this road roughly 4.5 miles to reach the Rabbit Gulch Wildlife Management Unit. Another few hundred yards will take you through a mature stand of Pinyon/Juniper to the old chaining area. An open area; old, uprooted trees; and small live trees make the chained area easy to identify.

Rules, Regulations and Helpful Hints:

Suggestions:

- 1) Map - the USGS Duchesne 1:100,000 map is useful to reach the site and shows the entire area.
- 2) Vehicles are restricted to the main existing roads. Please park along the road itself, do not drive off or follow the small two tracks. This area is a critical winter range and the fewer roads the better.
- 3) Cut only the pinyon and juniper. Other trees and bushes are much more scarce and have more values for wildlife. Cut all pinyon and juniper in the chained areas including the extremely small ones. A **chainsaw is recommended for the larger trees and a Pulaski (ax/flat pick combo)** or shovel may make removing these small trees easier.
- 4) Cut trees off at ground level. If any branches are left on the stump they will continue to grow and eventually one or more will become a main trunk. **Tree shears may help with cutting the remaining branches. It's also easier to work in pairs, one person cutting while the other works as the spotter, helping to hold branches etc. Another trick is to cut the tree off at knee or waist high, pull it out of the way, and then recut at ground level.**
- 4) Leave the trees where they fall. These fallen trees will help a) prevent erosion, b) catch moisture by trapping blowing snow and c) provide valuable microhabitats for small animals and plants.
- 5) Take as many safety precautions as you can while cutting such as using quality eye wear, gloves, heavy boots, etc. Also don't go solo; take along someone who can be there in case of an emergency.
- 6) Pack it in, pack it out. Please take your litter home and leave the area as clean or cleaner than you found it.
- 7) Tell someone where you are going and when you will return, and then stick to your plan. If you have a cell phone, bring it. Every year search and rescue has to look for someone, increase your chance of being found by giving them a correct place to look.
- 8) There are no organized campgrounds or camping areas in Rabbit Gulch. Our recommendation would be to stay at Starvation Reservoir, which has a State Park with a camping area, boat ramp and water. It also has some excellent walleye, bass and trout fishing.
- 9.) Take along extra water, food, gas, spare tires, etc. Rabbit Gulch is not too far from civilization but it is always good to go prepared for emergencies.

To Receive Dedicated Hunter Credit:

- 1) Prior to going in the field, pick up a timesheet/volunteer agreement at one of the Division offices, fill in Name and Job Description (Rabbit Gulch PJ removal project) for everyone who will be involved (including kids over 12) and have someone sign them.
- 2) When you do the project, record on the timesheet as much information as you can such as: date, total hours worked (please break out drive time from on-site time – I will give credit for both), mileage (only one person per car should fill this out), also add where you cut, what equipment was used (chainsaw, handsaw, clippers) etc. If you have ideas on how to make the project go better, please include those also.
- 3) Please take before and after photos of the work done. These can be film or digital.
- 4) You may work more than eight hours and receive credit toward next year's requirements. Unfortunately, I cannot give Dedicated Hunter credit beyond the 24 hours needed during a three-year period.
- 5) Send the timesheets and other information back to: Utah Wildlife Resources, Attn: Ron Stewart, 152 East 100 North, Vernal Utah 84078. Photos and information can be emailed, this also helps as a backup and a way for me to contact you if I have questions. I do need the volunteer agreement/time sheet to make it official so don't forget to mail those to me.

Note: credit will be given for the hours worked cutting down trees and drive time. Other time such as eating, fishing, camping can not be considered for credit.



Juniper – scaled leaves



Pinyon Pine – needle shaped leaves

Finally, have some fun! Take along family and friends and make a day or weekend of the event. There is good fishing and camping nearby as well as good places to watch wildlife such as Starvation Reservoir and the Uinta Mountains.

Thank you for considering this project!!